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MLGPA News (July 1999)

Betsy Smith

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MLGPA News

Advocacy for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Communities since 1984

P.O. Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347-0232

July 1999

New Anti-Discrimination Bill Printed

L.D. 2239 "An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination" was released to the Legislature on May 24th. To announce the bill to the general public, MLGPA held a press conference on the following day; the story appeared in most of our daily newspapers, on many of our TV stations and Maine Public Radio. The bill has been carried over to the next session of the legislature, which begins in January 2000. We wish to thank (and you can, too) the following legislators for their sponsorship:

Sponsored by Sen. Joel Abromson, R-Cumberland. Cosponsored by Rep. Mike Saxl, D-Portland and Senators Jane Amero, R-Cumberland; President Mark Lawrence, D-York; Betty Lou Mitchell, R-Penobscot; and Bruce MacKinnon, R-York. Representatives Robert Cameron, R-Rumford; William Norbert, D-Portland; Michael Quint, D-Portland; Speaker G. Steven Rowe, D-Portland; Robert Stanwood, R-Southwest Harbor; Kathleen Stevens, D-Orono and Dan Williams, D-Orono.

IMPORTANT HIGHLIGHTS

A great deal of thought has gone into the new anti-discrimination bill. While there are no changes in its basic provisions, the bill does propose new language to make it abundantly clear that the Maine Human Rights Act does not grant any "special rights" or "legislative approval." We believe that by putting those questions to rest, we remove the objections of many people who have not supported this measure in the past. Here are its key points:

▼ Discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, public accom-

modations and credit based on sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual) will be prohibited.

▼ The bill will add sexual orientation to each section (employment, housing, credit and public accommodations) of the Human Rights Act, not just amend the policy section as in prior bills.

▼ The legislation and the ballot question both clearly state that the Maine Human Rights Act does not convey legislative approval of, or special rights to, any person or group of persons.

▼ Religious organizations and institutions that do not receive public funds will be exempt from this bill.

If passed by the 119th Legislature, this bill will go on the ballot to be

ratified by the citizens of Maine in the next general election, November 2000. The ballot question is incorporated within the bill and seeks a "yes" vote to ratify. It reads:

"Do you favor ratifying the action of the 119th Legislature whereby it passed an Act extending to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation the same civil rights protections now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin and physical or mental disability in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and credit and where the Act expressly states that nothing in the Act confers legislative approval of, or special rights to, any person or group of persons?"

Legislative Report

from Susan Farnsworth, MLGPA Lobbyist

The following report is our Legislative Wrap-up for the 119th Legislature. In all but one of these bills, the positions taken by the board of MLGPA prevailed. While this is great news, the fact that some of these bills were even submitted is cause for concern. We've got to mobilize more of our members to work with their local legislators and continue our strong legislative program. Included for each bill is the legislative document number (LD), title, sponsor, committee, and outcome as of June 3, 1999, such as Failed or Carried Over.

CIVIL RIGHTS BILLS

LD 2239 "An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination." Sen. Joel Abromson (and 12 cosponsors). Judiciary Committee. CARRIED OVER to next session, January 2000. NOTE: At the beginning of the session, 6 separate civil rights bills (which proposed amending the Maine Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation) had been filed. Ultimately only this one bill, LD 2239, was printed.

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MLGPA

Advocacy for the
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
and Transgendered
Communities
since 1984

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Vice President

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Erik Richard

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Calendar of Events

June 27 — New York Pride march. For more information contact Southern Maine Pride at 774-7800.

July 10 — Bangor Pride march. For more information contact Southern Maine Pride at 774-7800.

July 17 — MLGPA Summer Retreat. 10am-4pm. Gray. For more information contact MLGPA at 1-800-55-MLGPA.

July 29-August 1 — Federation of Statewide LGBT Political Organizations Annual Meeting. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

August 19 — MLGPA Board meeting, 6-9pm, University of Maine at Augusta, Robinson Hall.

MLGPA Receives Grant

MLGPA received a \$1000 technical assistance grant from the Maine Community Foundation to fund attendance at a national conference in August. Two representatives from Maine (one from MLGPA and the other from the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights) will attend the annual meeting of the Federation of Statewide LGBT Political Organizations in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At the 4-day conference, discussions will be held on statewide civil rights and hate crimes bills, fundraising, and other ongoing political issues in the LGBT community.

Maine Rural Network Listings

June 27 — 6:00 pm. Western Maine Rural Network meeting at the E. Bethel Grange, E. Bethel Road. This meeting will focus on planning a community forum on the anti-abortion referendum this summer. Come join the opposition to the latest initiative of the Christian Right. Snacks included. For directions, please contact Naomi 642-2015.

June 30 — 6:30 pm. Northern Oxford County group meets in Rumford Public Library basement. Nancy Foss of the MCLU Reproductive Choice Project, will be discussing the upcoming anti-abortion referendum. This group meets the last Wednesday of each month — same time, same location. FMI contact Jon 562-4519.

July 15 — 6:00 pm. Southern Kennebec County meeting will be held at the Maine Education Association (MEA)

Offices in Augusta. We will show *Not In Our Town*, Billings Montana's response to hate crimes and talk about local acts of hate and discrimination. Come share your stories and concerns about the quality of life in Kennebec County. The meeting will be followed with a social gathering at the Thai Star Restaurant in Augusta. For further information contact Naomi at 642-2015.

August 28 — 8:00 am-1:00 pm. The future of civil rights is in your hands... and in your closet. MRN Raffle, Tag & Bake Sale. Come and check it out!! We are accepting donations of tag sale items, baked goods, etc. Please call Madeline at 642-2015, if you wish to be a part of this event or want to sell raffle tickets. Located at the Waterville UU Church, 84 Silver Street, Waterville.

MLGPA MINUTES

May 20, 1999

Members Present: Paul Alpert, Maggie Allen, Larry Bliss, Harold Booth, Graham DeCoster, David Garrity, Celeste Gosselin, Robin Lambert, P.J. Mears, Betsy Smith, Susan Sparaco, Mark Sullivan

Committee Reports: (Membership) Membership renewal follow-up phone calls are scheduled for Wed. June 9, 1999 at 6:00. Members who have not renewed by July 2, 1999 will be removed from the list for purposes of membership benefits.

(Special Events) A process has been developed for obtaining sponsors for our special events. MLGPA will have a table at Portland Pride on June 19, 1999. We will also be marching in the parade. Marchers are to be at Congress Square in Portland by 11:00 a.m. on June 19th.

(Legislative) We received an update on the civil rights bill being printed. The proposed bill will include the specific referendum question in it. The bill attempts to clarify and defuse issues raised by opponents in the past. For example, the bill expressly refutes an intent to create "special rights."

Agenda order: Our monthly meetings have been beginning at 6:00 p.m. with committee meetings. However, because this is a quiet time for many of our committees, we have decided to begin our meetings with general agenda items to make more efficient use of our time. Time will be allotted for committees to meet, if necessary at the end of the agenda.

Fundraising Efforts: We received an update on our major donor fundraising efforts. To date, we have more than doubled the funds raised in any one year.

Board Retreat: The annual Board retreat will be July 17, 1999 at the home of Celeste Gosselin.

Federation Meeting: We received a \$1000 grant from Maine Community Foundation which will be used to send MLGPA representatives to the annual Federation meeting.

Resource Guide Proposal: We discussed Beth Martin's proposal to develop a comprehensive LGBT resource guide. The executive committee will conduct further review of the scope and proposed budget of the proposed project.

Anti-Violence Project: A data bank of counselors for victims of violence is being developed. Counselors having experience with LGBT counseling or trauma victims are eligible for entry.

Scholarship Awards: The scholarship committee has selected this year's two high school scholarship recipients. One of the recipients attends Mount Desert Island High School; the other is a student at Central High School in East Corinth. P.J. Mears and Ron Hersom will be the our representatives at the students' awards ceremony.

MLGPA Report from the State House

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HIV AND AIDS-RELATED BILLS

LD 211 "An Act to Criminalize the Negligent or Purposeful Transmission of HIV." Rep. Thomas Shields. Criminal Justice Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1320 "An Act to Create a Penalty for the Intentional Transmission of STD's." Sen. Beverly Daggett. Criminal Justice Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 57 "An Act to change reporting requirements of certain HIV test results." Rep. Thomas Shields. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 58 "An Act Regarding the Composition of the Maine HIV Advisory Committee." Rep. Thomas Shields. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1129 "An Act to Amend the Laws pertaining to the Maine HIV Advisory Committee." Rep. Michael Quint. Judiciary Committee. (P.L. 1999, c. 390) **ENACTED**

LD 914 "An Act to Require Testing for HIV and Blood-borne Pathogens of All Prisoners in the Maine Correctional System." Rep. Thomas Shields. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1591 "An Act to Amend the Laws Concerning HIV Testing." Rep. Thomas Shields. Judiciary Committee **FAILED**.

LD 1791 "An Act to Promote Effective Management of Occupational exposure to HIV." Sen. Jill Goldthwait. Judiciary Committee. **ENACTED**

LD 1653 "An Act to Amend the Laws Governing the Confidentiality of Health Care Information." Rep. Elaine Fuller. Judiciary Committee. **ENACTED**

ELECTION LAWS

LD 314 "An Act to Restrict Circulation of Initiated Petitions from being within 25 feet of voting places." Rep. Leo Kieffer. Legal & Veterans' Affairs; State & Local Committees. **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**

LD 122 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Amend the Timing of Elections Following the Submission of

a Petition for People's Veto." Sen. Susan Longley. Legal & Veterans' Affairs; State & Local Committees. **ENACTED**

LD 228 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require a Referendum for a People's Veto to Be Held at a Primary or General Election." Rep. Daniel Williams. Legal & Veterans' Affairs; State & Local Committees. **INDEFINITELY POSTPONED**

LD 641 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require a Fixed Number of Signatures on Initiative Referenda Petitions." Sen. Richard ("Spike") Carey. Legal & Veterans' Affairs; State & Local Committees. **FAILED**.

LD 642 "RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Require That Petition Signatures be Based on 10% of Registered Voters." Sen. Richard ("Spike") Carey. Legal & Veterans' Affairs; State & Local Committees. **FAILED**.

SAFE SCHOOLS BILLS

LD 1798 "An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Commission to Study Providing Educators with More Authority to Remove Violent Students from Educational Settings." Rep. James Skoglund. Education Committee. (P.L. 1999, c. 351) Amended version **ENACTED**

LD 1305 "An Act to Establish and Fund Conflict Resolution Programs in the Public Schools." Rep. Elizabeth Watson. Education Committee. **ENACTED as amended; CARRIED OVER to next session, January 2000.**

LD 879 "An Act to Enable School Attendance." Rep. Michael Brennan. Education Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1946 "An Act to Provide for Safe and Orderly Schools." Rep. Shirley Richardson. Education Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1834 "An Act to Support Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs." Rep. James Skoglund. Education Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1534 "An act to Facilitate the Transfer of Education Records for Students Transferring to Another Public School." Rep. Elizabeth Watson. Education Committee. **FAILED**.

LD 1863 "An Act to Allow School Officials to Provide Information Regarding Certain Juveniles to Other Agencies" Rep. Elaine Fuller. Education Committee. **FAILED**.

MISCELLANEOUS BILLS RELATING TO CIVIL RIGHTS

LD 264 "An Act to Establish English as the Official State Language." Rep. Thomas S. Shields. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. **FAILED**.

LD 896 "An Act to Require Identification for Hearing Impaired Persons." Rep. Lois Snowe-Mello. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. **FAILED**.

LD 703 "An Act to Create the Maine Civil Rights Act of 1999." Rep. Adam Mack. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. **FAILED**.

LD 413 "An Act to Prohibit Discrimination Against Motorcyclists." Rep. Peggy Pendleton. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. **FAILED**.

LD 822 "An Act to Rename the Harassment Based on Characteristic Law" Rep. Christine Savage. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. 4/5/99 (P.L. 1999, c. 51) **ENACTED**

NOTE: New name of this crime (17 MRSA (c.93-C) §2931: "Interference with Constitutional and Civil Rights."

LD 1440 "An Act to Designate Civil Rights Day." Sen. Beverly Daggett. Education, Transportation & Judiciary Committees. **FAILED**.

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICE

LD 137 "An Act to Require Parental Notification for Minors Seeking Abortions." Rep. Douglas Ahearn. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED**.

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Human Rights Campaign Seeks Your Help

In January, Senators Jim Jeffords, R-Vt., Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., William Roth, R-Del., and Daniel Moynihan, D-N.Y., introduced S. 331: "The Work Incentive Improvement Act of 1999." The bill would ensure that a person with a disability, *including someone with HIV disease*, would have continued access to adequate and affordable health insurance when he or she returns to work. Currently the risk of losing access to new treatments for HIV by giving up federal health benefits, like Medicaid, often prevents people with HIV or AIDS from seeking employment.

Maine's Senators Snowe and Collins are among 74 Senators who have co-sponsored S. 331, and the bill will

pass overwhelmingly—if Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., schedules the bill for a vote.

The Human Rights Campaign urges you to contact our senators to express your support for this legislation and to ask them to urge Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott to schedule S. 331, as it is written, without changes, right away.

By telephone: Check your phone book for the District offices nearest you or call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be transferred to the Senator's office.

By mail: Address your letter to The Honorable Senator _____, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

MLGPA President Honored by RBPA

The Rainbow Business and Professional Association held its annual "Awards for Excellence" Dinner on June 13 in Portland. RBPA recognizes excellence in four categories: large corporations, small corporations, non-profit organizations, and individuals. Unlike many awards dinners in our community, the room was filled with nominees and RBPA chose three winners in each category.

Individuals honored for their service to the community were MLGPA president Betsy Smith, gay activist and philanthropist David Becker, and long-time gay activist Jim Estes.

Other honorees included Unum, Fairchild Semi-Conductor, Holiday Inn By The Bay, Admirals Inn, Casco Bay Weekly, Drop Me A Line, Out-right, Maine SpeakOut Project, and Merrymeeting AIDS Services.

Legislative Report

Continued from Page 3

LD 571 "An Act to Prohibit Partial Birth Abortions." Rep. Adam Mack. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED.**

LD 917 "An Act to Ban Partial Birth Abortion Except to Protect the Life of Health of the Mother." Rep. Robert Camcron. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED.**

LD 1593 "An Act to Ban Partial Birth Abortion." (BILL INITIATED BY PETITION) Judiciary Committee. **FAILED.** *Note: Because it was not passed by the legislature, this issue goes on the ballot this November.*

LD 2123 "An Act to Require a 24-Hour Waiting Period Before an Abortion May be Performed." Rep. Douglas Ahearne. Judiciary Committee. **FAILED.**

RELATED WORK BY MLGPA

In addition to the preceding 32 bills, MLGPA also monitored, and in some cases did preparatory work on, over 24 other proposed bills (including six civil rights related bills, two HIV bills, about 15 anti-choice bills, and some miscellaneous others), which never emerged as printed bills.

MLGPA's lobbyist, Susan Farnsworth, submitted written testimony for MLGPA on 23 of the above-named bills, as well as attended various hearings, work sessions, and floor debates on a couple of dozen key bills from the above list.

In addition, Susan tracked legislation by topical and statutory computer search on a weekly basis throughout the session, and did a visual scan of all bill titles & most amendments as they were printed. (A total of 2252 bills were printed during the 119th session!) In April, MLGPA organized the very successful Equality Begins At Home (EBAH) luncheon at the State House, attended by nearly 40 GLBT organizations and at least 60 legislators. MLGPA also held a news conference to announce LD 2239 "An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination," when it was printed in late May.

